

In this issue:

- **In the News:**
 - **"False Reports"**
 - **The DNA backlog**
- **Upcoming Events:**
 - **April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)**
 - **Join Team RVA at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon!**
 - **Standing Silent Witness 2009 – April 24**
 - **Save the Date for RVA's 35th Anniversary Celebration**

In the News:

True or False: The real story with "false reports" of rape

You may have heard or read about the "false reports" of rape in recent news – in March, a young woman in Tinley Park and in September, a young woman in Palos Heights both said that the rapes they reported never occurred. In fact, the stories about these two young women have been some of the most dominant rape-related stories in the media in recent months. But the media coverage does not accurately represent the frequency of "false reports" of rape – especially when you take into account that RVA alone responds to an average of 56 survivors in hospital ERs every month! We are sure you didn't see the vast majority of their stories in the news – and certainly not the outcry that followed the "false report" headlines.

According to the authors of the recent article "[False Reports: Moving Beyond the Issue to Successfully Investigate and Prosecute Non-Stranger Sexual Assault](#)" around 2-8% of rape reports to law enforcement are false – and there are differing definitions of what "false report" even means. In addition, many survivors of rape do not report to law enforcement or other systems, for a variety of reasons – including fear of not being believed and being retraumatized. Compounding the issue are persisting stereotypes of what "real rape" looks like. Contrary to [popular mythology](#), all survivors are not hysterical, seriously injured women, assaulted by a stranger, who can remember the attack in perfect chronological detail. Rape crosses all boundaries, and thus, it is unrealistic to expect that all rape survivors will look, talk, and behave in a way that conforms to our *idea* of what a rape survivor should look like.

Ultimately, we'd like to see a whole lot more attention paid to the survivors of rape we work with and on behalf of, day after day – and a whole lot more [education focused on transforming the rape culture, and culture of violence](#), that permeates all of our lives.

The DNA Backlog – Justice Delayed

Auditor General William Holland released a [report](#) last week that revealed an extensive and under-reported backlog of cases of evidence submitted to the state crime labs for analysis. This DNA testing backlog has profound effects in the criminal justice process. This evidence can either help to convict or it can exonerate – but it can't do much gathering dust. RVA is currently working with many survivors who have been waiting 9 to 12 months for their evidence analysis to come back from the

lab. That wait not only has a cost to our public safety – it also has a very human cost. One survivor put it this way:

“I don’t want to give up, because I know that if he did it to me, he’ll do it to someone else. But I’m so frustrated and stressed; this has gone on too long. It’s been a year that I’ve been waiting for the evidence to come back. He’s going on with his life, but I can’t go on with mine. No one should have to go through this.”

We’ve heard that the [Illinois State Police disputes aspects of the audit](#), and say that the backlog of thousands is comparable to other states. We don’t know about you, but we think that’s cold comfort for survivors struggling to get on with their lives. RVA believes we can do better than this; we are supporting survivors and advocating with the institutions that are charged with serving them because their courage and persistence should not be rewarded with justice delayed.

Be part of the transformation – raise awareness in April!

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)! SAAM is the perfect time for all of us to rally together to continue the fight to end sexual violence! Please spread the word and bring your family and friends to our SAAM activities – we have rallies, poetry readings, discussions, and more throughout the month of April!

Check our [website](#) often for our SAAM activities calendar and updates - all RVA events are free and open to the public.

Run Against Rape! Join RVA's Team for the 2009 Bank of America Chicago Marathon!

Run Against Rape! Join RVA’s Team for the Bank of America Chicago Marathon on Sunday, October 11, 2009. The Marathon is filling up quickly—**register today and become a member of the RVA team!** Learn more about our team at www.rapevictimadvocates.org.

You can have the life-changing experience of completing a marathon while knowing that every dollar you raise will help survivors of sexual assault begin healing from this horrific trauma.

As part of Team RVA, you will receive:

- Discounts for the Chicago Endurance Sports Marathon Training
- A team singlet
- Weekly team emails featuring training and fundraising tips
- Your own webpage to secure online pledges and donations
- Team networking events
- Lots of support from RVA volunteers and staff!

Already registered? Send your race confirmation ID# to development@rapevictimadvocates.org and we’ll add you to the team.

Not registered? Register for the race at <http://www.chicagomarathon.com>. Choose Rape Victim Advocates under the "I have already contacted an affiliated charity" question. Then, send your race confirmation ID# to RVA.

Not a runner? You can still support Team RVA by going to www.active.com/donate/TeamRVA09 and making a contribution, and joining RVA as we cheer on our runners on October 11!

Connect to others Running Against Rape on our [Facebook Event Page!](#)

Standing in Solidarity

**April 24th 12 pm – 1 pm:
Standing Silent Witness Demonstration
Daley Plaza (Washington and Dearborn)**

Join us for Standing Silent Witness, Rape Victim Advocates' signature event for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Standing silently for one hour, participants wear t-shirts displaying the stories of sexual assault survivors in order to "break the silence" about sexual violence. At this powerful, moving demonstration, community members, advocates, volunteers and survivors bear witness to stories that are too often invisible and unacknowledged.

For more information, contact Carrie at prevention@rapevictimadvocates.org or call (312)443-9603 x37.

Save the Date! RVA's 35th Anniversary Celebration

Please join us in celebrating 35 years of helping victims become survivors!

Thursday, June 25, 2009
The Newberry Library
60 West Walton Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Cocktails begin at 6:30 pm
Dinner to follow

If you would like to participate in the planning of this extraordinary event, or would like information on sponsorship, volunteer and program book ad opportunities, please call (312) 443-9603 or e-mail development@rapevictimadvocates.org.